1992-07-19
St. Petersburg Times

A reflection of peace of mind

■ Gari Carter has a new outlook on life since a near fatal car accident. She used a series of tapes to endure surgery without anesthesia.

By SABRINA MILLER
Times Staff Writer

Gari Carter is working on her second life with a vengeance.

The slender, soft-spoken woman who practices and teaches yoga radiates spirituality in an engaging, non-threatening manner. The eclectic design mix of traditional and non-traditional, Western and non-Western in her home near Palm Harbor shows her deeply reflective sense of history.

The understated elegance of Carter's home, down to the organic deodorizer wafting through the air, captures her creativity and appreciation of solitude. But Carter, whose home is decorated according to the principles of *feng shui*, the Chinese art of placement, will be the first to tell you she wasn't always the mild-mannered woman she is today.

"I'm a much happier person today. Much more easy-going and laid back. I take most things in stride," Carter says. "Ever since the accident, I have a totally different outlook on life."

Ten years ago, on a country road in Virginia, Carter was hit head-on in a devastating car accident with her then 11-year-old son. Her own car was crushed into her, destroying the lower half of her face and partially severing one leg where the bones were broken from the toes to the hips. Her son, who escaped without a scratch, used CPR, which he had just learned in the Boy Scouts, to keep her breathing.

Carter says she had a near-death experience in the hospital at the University of Virginia. The self-described "bionic woman" had several painful surgeries to reconstruct the lower part of her face. Bone grafts gave her new jaws and cheekbones. Skin grafts gave her new gums.

Carter says a pushy friend kept urging her to try using a series of tapes that would allow her to endure surgery without anesthesia. Carter used the Hemi-Sync *Emergency Series* tapes, produced by the Monroe Institute in Virginia.

The organization, founded in the mid-1950s, produces tapes to help people learn to control various states of consciousness. Separate signals, some with low-frequency tones and some with a soothing voice, are fed into each ear through headphones. The tapes are supposed to synchronize the left and right brain hemispheres, producing the most desired condition for using brain potential.

Not to be confused with subliminal tapes, Hemi-Sync tapes contain no hidden messages or words. They are considered a "self-controlling tool." The tapes assist people with mental health, sleep dreams and stress management, among other problems. The Emergency Series tapes assist individuals through major illness, severe injury and surgery.

When Carter first used the tapes during surgery in 1983, she says, "I was terrified at the prospect of hurting in several areas and did not trust the quality of the *Emergency Series*, despite what I had read and heard."

But using only the tapes, Carter got through the 4½-hour surgery to repair her nose and the bones in her face with no pain medication and minimal bruising and swelling. She obtained her doctor's approval, but just in case the tapes didn't work Carter had instructed the doctors and nurses to have codeine ready.

During a subsequent operation, the batteries in her tape player ran out and abruptly interrupted her relaxed and pain-free state. She was able to recreate the tapes in her mind until fresh batteries were brought to her. Carter insists she felt no pain during the operations, only the slight pulling of the surgeon's knife as he cut into her skin.

Leslie France of the Monroe Institute says the fact that the tapes were successful for Carter is not exceptional, but "the fact that she had so many surgeries is." "The tapes are not a cure for a particular illness or ailment, but they do promote healing and well-being," France said. "A lot of it depends on the cooperation of the patients, and Gari had a great attitude, which helped her."

With a broad smile on a face that shows barely any visible scars, Carter says, "I have been given another chance and this is my second life. Just think what might have been if I hadn't listened to my pushy friend."